

Uses and Misuses of Power in Task-Performing Teams

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As organizational researchers have struggled to understand and explain the causes of team effectiveness (or the lack of it), they have drawn on work in social psychology, sociology, and organizational behavior. From this work, several models have emerged on how group behavior influences group performance, and most models include task as well as relational and external functions (Goodman, Ravlin, & Schminke, 1987; Hackman, 1987). Task functions are directed toward the production or performance of a product or service, the end result of which can potentially be measured or evaluated. In addition, to achieve their common goals, teams must establish and maintain productive internal relationships (Levine & Moreland, 1990). Finally, externally directed activities are those that remind us that groups within organizations are not closed systems (Ancona, 1990; Goodman et al., 1987).

Research on team functions generally treats such behaviors as if they are enacted by the whole team. We pay closer attention to the issue

of who engages in these behaviors. Does it matter for team effectiveness whether particular behavioral functions are fulfilled by the group as a whole or by particular individuals? This question brings us to the focus of this chapter—the intersection of team effectiveness, team member behavior, and power.

The Phenomenon

Teams in organizations are frequently composed of individuals who vary in their hierarchical status, competency, resources, and other characteristics that invest that person with power relative to other group members. Thus, in most teams there exists broad potential for particular individuals to exert more influence on team functioning than the average member (Hollander, 1958). How powerful members use their power and the influence on team effectiveness of their choices are the central questions we address here. We limit our discussion to complex task-performing teams—that is, we treat only those teams that together produce a product or service and have the authority to determine their work strategies and manage their internal processes. We thus exclude groups that exist primarily or solely for social purposes or those groups that do routinized work and have little or no authority over their process.

We define team effectiveness following Hackman (1990) as the degree to which (a) the team's output meets the standards of quality of the people who receive or review that output, (b) the process enhances the team's ability to work together interdependently and effectively in the future, and (c) the group experience contributes to the personal well-being or satisfaction of the team members. The following examples taken from some real teams illustrate the potential importance of the phenomenon.

During our time in the MBA classroom, we have had opportunity to observe scores of project teams and to learn (via retrospective accounts by team members) about the dynamics in such teams, including their power dynamics. These teams typically are asked to identify, analyze, and make recommendations to solve a pressing management problem in a real-world organization. To that end, teams must find a client organization. Most often, one member of the project group acquires access to an organization of which he or she was a past

employee. Thus, at the launch of most of these teams, one team member has control of a critical resource—that is, the team project site and client. Because of this critical resource, this team member has the potential to exert influence over team functioning to a greater extent than those members who do not have any particular power source (Pfeffer, 1992).

How do these team members use this particular form of power? Our observations have uncovered at least three different patterns of power use by this team member—patterns that appear to have very different consequences for team outcomes. First is what we label the "overuse" pattern, in which the team member with the client contact uses his or her special status in the group to exert influence over most aspects of group functioning, including task processes (e.g., how the group will collect data), external relations (e.g., what questions the group should raise with the client), and interpersonal processes (e.g., the group operating norms). The individual uses his or her power to dominate team processes in ways that are in the powerholder's best interests or consistent with the powerholder's views of effective task strategies. Our observations suggest that many of these teams perform quite poorly. In addition, these teams are characterized by widespread member dissatisfaction and frustration with the group and with its final product.

The second pattern we label "abdication." In this pattern, we see the team member with client access behaving no differently from any other team member (generally to avoid taking on what is viewed as excessively difficult work), exerting no special influence over task, internal, or external relations processes—not even to the extent of managing the team's entry into the client organization. Our observations suggest that this, too, is a dysfunctional pattern. Such teams tend toward mediocre to poor performance (usually because of limited data from the client). By contrast to the first pattern, however, they tend to show relatively positive affective reactions to each other and to the team's work process.

The third pattern is referred to as "managing the resource." In this pattern, the powerful member influences other team members only in the specific domain of his or her special resource—that is, relations with the client. The powerful team member may influence the team in defining the client's problem, choosing whom in the organization would be good sources of information, and he or she may serve as the

main contact who establishes meetings of the team with the client. On the basis of our data, this appears to be the most effective pattern; teams with this pattern of power use perform relatively well and show no particular tendency toward member dissatisfaction.

Thus, we argue that individual powerholders use their power for different ends, and that these different uses of power have differential consequences for team effectiveness—positively influencing some aspects of team effectiveness and negatively influencing others. Throughout this chapter, we define a “misuse of power” as an influence attempt by the powerholder that will undermine team effectiveness. We return to the example behaviors at the end of this chapter. We describe a functional view of team behavior in which it is argued that there are functions (task, internal, and external relations) that must be fulfilled for a team to perform effectively. We propose that all teams are better off when these functions are performed by someone; teams will perform best, however, when particular functions are performed by the team, whereas others are executed by a powerful individual. Through our discussion of team functions and power, we derive specific and testable propositions about the uses and misuses of individual power in task-performing teams. Finally, by identifying the critical similarities among functions that represent uses or misuses of individual power, we induce three general propositions that specify the kinds of functions that are best fulfilled by powerful individuals and those that are best fulfilled by the group as a whole. Our aim throughout this discussion is to develop researchable predictions about the consequences for group effectiveness of the arenas in which individual team members use their power.

Power and a Functional View of Team Behavior

In the previous example, we focused on one particular type of power that might be available to individuals in project teams. Of course, individuals come to teams with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and, often, different levels and sources of power. Power has been defined in several ways, but a simple definition is that with power one party can get the other to do what the latter normally would not do (Dahl, 1957; Kotter, 1979). Adding to this definition is the view of power

as a function of the dependency of others on the focal individual (Emerson, 1964; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1977; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). In their work on power, French and Raven (1959) identified five major bases of social power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power. Many contemporary discussions of power are grounded in this typology. Another prominent perspective is resource dependency theory, which defines power as the control over resources, including money, supplies, time, equipment, critical services, human capital, or all these (Pfeffer, 1992; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974). Also important is network theory, which defines power by an individual's location in the organizational structure (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973; Marsden, 1983; White, 1970). In the network view, issues of centrality, criticality, and weak and strong ties are important determinants of power.

Regardless of the power source, one of the important features of the theory of social power is the conceptual feature of “potentiality” (French & Raven, 1959). Power bases give individuals the potential to influence. How (and if) powerful individuals use their power to influence or lead the team can vary widely; they might shape task strategies, establish the teams' basic norms and values, allocate resources, coordinate group efforts, or negotiate with outsiders on behalf of the team. This chapter explores the appropriate uses and inappropriate misuses of power—regardless of its source—by team members. We define uses and misuses in terms of the consequences (positive or negative, respectively) for team effectiveness.

As outlined previously, we take a functional view of team behavior—that is, there are functions that must be fulfilled for a team to perform effectively. These team functions can be performed by particular individuals or by the team as a whole. In this view, all teams are better off when these functions are performed by someone; teams will perform best, however, when specific functions are performed by the team, whereas others are executed by a powerful individual. Although there are many functions that teams can perform, we use as examples those behaviors that we, as well as other theorists and researchers, have found to be important influences on team performance. In the following discussion, we break down team functions into two domains: task directed and relations directed.

The study of task functions has included developing task strategies and task-related values (Liang, Moreland, & Argote, 1995;

Wageman, 1995), setting team goals (Crowne & Rosse, 1995; Mitchell & Silver, 1990; Weingart, 1992), arriving at decision rules (Guzzo, 1982; Miller, 1989; Stasser, Kerr, & Davis, 1989), and role differentiation and the division of labor (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Moreland & Levine, 1982; Turner & Colomy, 1988). Relational functions include both internally directed and externally directed behaviors. Internally directed behaviors include managing team boundaries and interpersonal relationships (Hackman, 1983, 1990; Mannix, Goins, & Carroll, 1996; Moreland, 1987), arriving at group values and norms of behavior (Argote, 1989; Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985; O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1985), and managing conflict (Ancona, Friedman, & Kolb, 1991; Bazerman, Mannix, & Thompson, 1988; Gladstein, 1984; Jehn, 1995). Externally directed behaviors include boundary-spanning and liaison with external parties (Alderfer & Smith, 1982; Ancona, 1987, 1990; Katz & Tushman, 1981; Tushman, 1977), follow-through on information and links to clients (Hackman, 1990), accessing external information or resources (Pfeffer, 1986; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), and the implementation, recommendation, and review of final team output (Nadler & Tushman, 1988).

Although we do not claim that all the previously discussed functional behaviors are essential to all teams at all times, we do argue that each of these functions is useful for the group to achieve a high-quality output and to enhance the satisfaction of group members. In the following sections, we draw on examples of particular behaviors within the two domains to make specific predictions about the connections between these functions, who performs them, and team outcomes.

Task Domain

As noted previously, research has identified a wide range of task-related behaviors that are observed to varying degrees in teams. Such behaviors include coordinating member activities, assigning specific task roles, and helping other team members. We focus on two particular task-related behaviors to illustrate our arguments: (a) active monitoring of the team's performance and (b) altering task strategies in response to performance decrements or changes in task demands (i.e., problem solving).

Both these basic task functions have been demonstrated to be important influences on team performance. Attending to feedback and actively seeking data about performance have often been identified as essential task functions that differentiate between superior and poor-performing teams (Hackman, 1987; Hare, 1976; Kolodny & Kiggundu, 1980; Nadler, 1979; Pearce & Ravlin, 1987). Druskat (1995) found, for example, that a tendency to focus attention on the team's strengths and weaknesses and to seek feedback directly from their work outcomes differentiated among superior- and average-performing teams. Similarly, McIntyre and Salas (1995) found that members of effective teams monitor performance and provide other team members with feedback.

By comparison, research is sparse on the devising of appropriate task strategies by teams. Many theorists do emphasize the importance of team strategies (Cohen, 1994; Goodman et al., 1987; Guzzo, 1986; Hackman, 1987; Schwarz, 1994; Steiner, 1972), and what little research has addressed the devising of task strategies has shown a positive relationship to team performance (Druskat, 1995; Wageman, 1996). Wageman, for example, showed that superb teams took time out from task execution to discuss different task strategies more often than did poor-performing teams.

Both monitoring performance and devising task strategies are functions that can be initiated and fulfilled by the team as a whole or by particular team members. In each case, we argue that teams that do engage in these behaviors will outperform those that do not. Nevertheless, our central question, unaddressed by any previous research, remains: Are groups better off if these functions are fulfilled by powerful individuals or by the team as a whole?

Previous studies of the effects of performance monitoring (or attention to feedback) have not differentiated between individual and group behavior. That is, the group is assumed to have attended to performance feedback if any individual in the group has done so. Some recent evidence suggests that for monitoring performance, this is a reasonable stance—that is, who does it matters less than whether it is done at all. A field study of 40 self-managing teams (Wageman, 1996) assessed via interview and observation the degree to which teams engaged in specific self-managing behaviors. In this study, teams that monitored their own performance regularly strongly outperformed those that did not on a variety of objective performance measures. In some cases, it was not the team as a whole that did the performance

monitoring but rather a specific powerful individual (in this case, the "specialist," an individual who became an informal team leader on the basis of his or her technical expertise). This individual used his or her power to collect and interpret performance information and present these data to the team. In other teams, these actions were taken by various team members, and the data were reviewed by the team as a whole.

The data showed that there were no differences in the performance of teams whose specialist did the monitoring compared with teams who reviewed their performance together. Teams in which either the specialist or the team as a whole monitored performance, however, did outperform those teams that did not do it at all.

Thus, the basic function of collecting information and bringing it to the attention of the team can be done by anyone. Why does it not matter who does the monitoring? We suggest that monitoring of team performance requires only attention, a cognitive process that is more naturally an individual than a group process. To be sure, the process of making sense of data can draw effectively on multiple intelligences, but in the studies cited previously the researchers were concerned only with whether or not data were attended to and not how well those data were used. Attention by a single individual and the communication required to convey the data to the rest of the team are functions filled effectively by one person.

Proposition 1: Performance monitoring—drawing performance feedback to the attention of the team—is an appropriate use of individual power.

In contrast to monitoring, strategy design is a creative task influenceable by collective knowledge and skills; moreover, task strategies require execution by the team as a whole. Consequently, the effects of task strategy on team performance depend to a great degree on the capabilities used to design it and the commitment of team members to execute it. Decades of group research attest to the notion that multiple perspectives and sources of expertise enhance group performance. Moreover, research has shown that as groups interact they add knowledge and creativity, increase the understanding and acceptance of ideas, and improve commitment and motivation (Levine & Moreland, 1990; Maier, 1970; McGrath, 1984; McGrath & Kravitz, 1982; Shaw, 1981;

Zander, 1979). Both capabilities brought to bear on a choice of task strategy and collective commitment to that strategy are likely to be lower when strategy is determined by one individual.

Data from Wageman (1996) support the view that asserting task strategies is a misuse of power by powerful individuals. First, teams that frequently adapted their task strategies in response to data about performance decrements strongly outperformed those that did not. Groups in which the team as a whole determined strategy changes, however, outperformed those in which the informal team leader did so. Thus, for this team function, groups were better off when the team as a whole determined performance strategies than when a powerful individual used his or her influence to make such a decision for the team.

Proposition 2: Imposing a task strategy for the group is a misuse of individual power.

Before discussing relational functions, it is instructive to note the similarities in the patterns of findings for the two task functions. For both functions, the group performed more effectively when someone in the group engaged in that function than when no one engaged in that function. Although at one level this simply provides supportive evidence for our functional view of team behavior, it also provides a clue about appropriate uses of power by individual team members. Some teams fail to attend to important task-relevant feedback, or fail to adjust their task strategies, to their ultimate detriment. When a group is avoiding a task-relevant issue, one appropriate use of power by an individual member may be to influence the group to attend to that issue.

Relations Domain: Internal

The focus in this chapter is task-performing groups; thus, we are most concerned with the effects of essential functions on task performance. As such, the internal relations in groups are relevant to the extent that they affect the group interaction processes, and group interaction is relevant to the extent that it influences performance. A group composed of individuals who agree on work values and norms, and who are capable of handling conflict productively, should be better equipped

to enact task-relevant strategies and goals (Bar-Tal, 1989; Jehn, 1994; Jehn & Mannix, 1996; Schein, 1986). When the internal relations break down, the result can be motivation losses such as withdrawal or free riding (Maier, 1967; Steiner, 1972), opinion conformity (Janis, 1982), or destructive emotion-based conflict (Amason, 1996; Argyris, 1962; Jehn, 1995; Kelley, 1979). In the following sections, we focus on the internal relations issues of conflict, work values, and norms.

Conflict and Team Performance

Conflict is defined as an awareness by the parties involved of discrepancies, incompatible wishes, or irreconcilable desires (Boulding, 1963). Organizational researchers have recognized both the assets and the liabilities of conflict in group decisions. Some research has shown that conflict is detrimental to organizational functioning, decreases individual satisfaction, and lowers group productivity (Bourgeois, 1980; Evan, 1965; Gladstein, 1984; Schwenk & Crosier, 1993). Conversely, other findings show conflict to be beneficial, enhancing decision quality and planning, innovation, and productivity (Coser, 1970; Crosier & Rose, 1977; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Nemeth & Staw, 1989; Tjosvold, 1991).

It is apparent that the connection between conflict and performance remains less than well understood (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992). One key to unlocking this complex relationship lies in the differentiation of conflict as either relationship or task related (Crosier & Rose, 1977; Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954; Jehn, 1995; Pinkley, 1990; Wall & Nolan, 1986). Relationship conflict, also called affective conflict, is an awareness of interpersonal incompatibilities. It includes personal and affective components, such as friction, tension, and dislike among group members. Studies show that relationship conflict is detrimental to individual and group performance, member satisfaction, and the likelihood the group will work together in the future (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Mannix, 1996; Shah & Jehn, 1993). When group members have interpersonal problems or feel friction with one another, they may be distracted from the task, work less cooperatively, and produce sub-optimal products (Argyris, 1962; Kelley, 1979; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994; Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981).

Task, or cognitive, conflict is an awareness of differences in viewpoints and opinions pertaining to the group's task. In contrast to

relationship conflict, moderate levels of task conflict have been shown to be beneficial to group performance in various decision-making and group tasks. Teams performing complex cognitive tasks benefit from differences of opinion about the work being done (Bourgeois, 1985; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1990; Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Mannix, 1996; Shah & Jehn, 1993). Task conflict improves decision quality as groups drop old patterns of interaction and adopt new perspectives; the synthesis that emerges from the conflict is generally superior to the individual perspectives themselves (Mason & Mitroff, 1981; Schweiger & Sandberg, 1989; Schwenk, 1990).

The task conflict necessary to produce high-quality outcomes, however, may leave a feeling of negativity among team members (Amason, 1996; Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986; Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989). Critical evaluations, for example, seem to cause negative affective reactions regardless of the outcome (Baron, 1990). Negotiation researchers have consistently demonstrated the benefits of open conflict in reaching integrative solutions of high mutual gain in the dyad as well as the group (Ancona et al., 1991); a natural tendency of many negotiators, however, is to avoid the level of conflict necessary to reach optimal solutions (Lewicki & Litterer, 1994; Neale & Bazerman, 1991; Pruitt, 1981). In addition, some theorists have proposed that relationship, or affective, conflict can be the result of task conflict being misperceived as personal criticism (Amason, 1996; Brehmer, 1976; Deutsch, 1969). In other words, some groups develop a pattern of misinterpreting task conflict as relationship conflict—resulting in performance loss rather than gain. If this pattern is set, it is likely to continue (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985), resulting in high overall levels of relationship conflict and reducing the performance of the group.

Thus, there are many complexities associated with the effective use of conflict within groups. What role might powerful individuals play in influencing the nature and handling of conflict to the team's benefit? Given research evidence that task conflict enhances whereas relational conflict undermines team performance, combined with the natural tendency in teams toward conflict avoidance, we argue that it is useful for individual group members with special influence to encourage task conflict and discourage relationship conflict. This function is especially critical if the group is unwilling or unable to manage its conflict collectively. A powerful individual (or subset of group members) may thus

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be able to control the timing and nature of conflict to the benefit of the group. Indeed, internal group members (rather than outside "supervisors") are uniquely suited to do so. Members of the team are more likely to have continuous access to the group's process as well as direct knowledge of the underlying causes of particular conflicts; they are thus able to intervene in a knowledgeable and well-timed fashion. A powerful team member also is likely to have the "idiosyncrasy credits" (Hollander, 1958) to both influence the group to open discussion of task approaches and to persuade the group to shelve interpersonal disagreements in team interaction.

Proposition 3: Promoting well-timed task conflict is an appropriate use of individual power.

Work Values, Norms, and Group Performance

Norms are informal rules that groups adopt to regulate group members' behavior; they are among the least visible and most powerful forms of social control over human action (Hackman, 1976; Sherif, 1936). Although there has been a great deal of research on norms, most of it has focused on examining the impact norms have on other social phenomena (Feldman, 1984). There has been relatively little attention to how norms actually form and who is responsible for the norms we see operating in groups. The classic research on norm formation comes from Sherif (1936) and his work on the autokinetic effect. Sherif argued that his results demonstrated the basic psychological processes involved in the establishment of social norms; our experience is organized around or modified by collectively produced frames of reference. Feldman (1984) has presented a task-oriented alternative to this concept of emergent norms. He proposes that norms form in one or more of four ways: explicit statements by supervisors or coworkers—that is, by fiat; critical events in the group's history; primacy—that is, based on early behavior patterns that set up group expectations; and carry-over behaviors from past situations. Norms generated by fiat are similar to rules, in which a powerful individual explicitly expresses values, norms, or prescribed behaviors. The remaining three forms might be categorized as variations of collectively emergent norms.

In a relatively recent study of how norms form, Bettenhausen and Murnighan (1985) examined the formation of norms using a multi-

round negotiation exercise played over several weeks. They found that group norms regarding resource allocation emerged from the interaction between each group members' definition of the situation and the scripts or schemas that group members used to frame the situation. When group members had similar scripts, the group's interaction proceeded smoothly—each interaction confirmed the meaning that group members attached to the action. When the scripts were not similar, however, conflict resulted that was not always easy to resolve. At times, group members made overt persuasion attempts to pull the group toward their interpretation through challenges to the implied norm.

Thus, newly formed groups may or may not have a high level of agreement, or consensus, on important work-related norms and values. When group members have a high level of value consensus, members will tend to agree on norms regarding work, in turn promoting harmony and coordination (Nemeth & Staw, 1989). By contrast, when low-value consensus exists, members' core values and beliefs about their everyday work are challenged, causing friction and emotional upset (Bar-Tal, 1989; Schein, 1986). Differing values may cause group members to perceive situations and priorities differently, impeding the coordinated flow of work (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). In addition, value differences between a leader and the rest of the group can be a continuous source of tension for the team (Gray, Bougon, & Donnellon, 1985).

Consensus, or the lack of it, on work-related norms has implications for the type and amount of conflict that a group experiences. Groups that agree too readily on work values and norms may be advantaged by low levels of relationship conflict but may be disadvantaged by similarly low levels of task conflict. Group members with divergent work values and norms may have the opposite problem—that is, high task conflict as well as high relationship conflict (Jehn, 1994). The first case may be dealt with by an intervention from a powerful group member or team leader, as described previously. The second case, however, is somewhat more difficult. It requires that the group come to a workable arrangement on a variety of important work-related norms. This might be done by fiat—that is, by a powerful individual—or it might be arrived at by the collective.

We argue that the definition of work-related values and norms should be left to the group as a whole. By allowing the group to

negotiate their own work norms, they have the opportunity to discover the true underlying differences, fully understand one another's viewpoints, and struggle toward agreement. The conflict this generates is likely to increase acceptance, understanding, and commitment to the final outcome (Maier, 1967; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). In fact, the discussion of norms should be clearly and openly addressed by all newly formed groups and periodically reexamined. Like conflict, explicit discussion of norms tends to be a function in groups that is avoided by most team members. The role for a powerful individual is in influencing the group to address its norms directly as well as redirecting relationship conflict back to the task.

Proposition 4a: Influencing the group to address and evaluate its work values and norms is an appropriate use of individual power.

Proposition 4b: Dictating work values or norms by fiat is a misuse of individual power.

Relations Domain: External

Although task behaviors and internal relations have a long history in theory and research about group effectiveness, group external activity has only recently come to the attention of groups researchers (Ancona, 1987). This oversight may in part be due to early focus on laboratory-based groups, which had no external clients nor an organizational context beyond the experiment itself. External relations may also have become more prominent because of recent changes in the kinds of organizational teams researchers have the opportunity to observe: As "empowerment" and self-directed work teams become more prevalent, many more teams have the authority to deal directly with clients, to manage resources, and to engage in other activities external to the team.

Evidence for the importance of external activities to team performance is mounting. For example, researchers have stressed that teams must match their information processing capability to the information processing demands of the task environment (Gresov, 1989; Nadler & Tushman, 1988). Those studying innovation have emphasized the importance of boundary-spanning activities (Katz & Tushman, 1979), whereas theorists interested in power have focused on the importance

of external constituents for political action and influence (Pfeffer, 1992). Ancona and colleagues, however, truly developed this area of research by attempting to map out the full range of activities that groups use to cope with their environments (Ancona, 1987, 1990). This work began with a study of 100 sales teams in the telecommunications industry (Gladstein, 1984). Ancona found that group members saw the process aspects of their work as divided into an internal and an external component. In her study, internal processes were associated with team member satisfaction and team-rated performance; external process, however, was associated with sales revenue. In subsequent work, she concluded that teams enact a distinct set of activities and strategies toward their external environment (Ancona, 1990; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). We draw from this research to identify and focus on two particular external team functions: managing an outside authority and managing a client. We speculate as to the effects on team outcomes of a powerful individual team member fulfilling these functions alone versus the team as a whole fulfilling these functions.

It has been found that one of the important external relations that teams attempt to manage involves the perceptions and support of outside authority; Ancona and Caldwell (1992) labeled this "ambassadorial activity." This external-relations activity typically involves presenting the team capabilities and needs to managers in the larger organization to persuade authority that the team deserves and will use effectively additional resources. Although researchers have recognized that teams carry on this function, they have not addressed who in the team is likely to enact the behavior. It can, theoretically, be done by any or several team members or be a role shared at different times by different team members. We argue that a powerful team member is uniquely suited to fulfill this team function to the benefit of group performance.

As discussed earlier, individuals with greater power within the team may have that power for a variety of reasons, including higher status in the organizational hierarchy, special competence or expertise, a broad network of relations, or even extraordinary verbal ability. Just as these power sources allow the individual to have special influence over the actions of team members, they also can enhance the credibility of that individual with external authorities. Network relations, in addition, enhance the range of access that the individual has to organizational members with the authority to provide needed resources to

the team. Thus, the capability of powerful individuals to fulfill this function to the benefit of the team is greater than that of other team members.

Proposition 5: Managing the perceptions and support of outside authority is an effective use of individual power.

The second external activity we address is managing the relationship of the team with its client. Although not all teams have clients external to the organization, most teams do at least have a user of their product or service. Indeed, a definition of team effectiveness may include the degree to which the team product meets the standards of the people who receive or use the product (Hackman, 1990). In many organizational teams, direct client contact is maintained exclusively by one individual who has greater power in the organization than do other members. In consulting teams, for example, the project manager is usually a team member with greater status in the organizational hierarchy. This team leader meets with the client to outline the nature of the project and produce a prospectus, interprets client needs, and keeps the client informed throughout the project. Only at project completion do other team members typically meet with the client, often simply to present the team's conclusions. What effect does this pattern of behavior have on team performance? In our view, exclusive contact between a high-status team member and the client is likely to undermine team performance relative to contact between the client and the team as a whole. The pattern cited previously is defended typically on the basis of "efficiency"—that is, minimizing the time involved in meetings with a client while still satisfying their requirements. This means of managing client relations, however, can be detrimental to group performance for two reasons. First, direct contact with users of the team's product or service is known to be an important source of task-based motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Second, understanding the requirements of a client is an interpretive act, and determining the process of meeting those requirements is a creative one. Both activities can benefit from drawing on the unique perspectives and abilities of individual team members. When powerful individuals monopolize contact with the external client, both team-level motivation and the quality of work done for the client are compromised.

Proposition 6: Maintaining exclusive relations with the client is a misuse of individual power.

General Discussion

The arguments presented in the preceding section allow us to develop some general propositions about the uses and misuses of power by individual members of task-performing teams. We previously argued that groups were better off if the group as a whole (a) collectively established its operating norms and (b) participated in managing relations with external clients. In each case, the benefit of the group's involvement in these functions derives from their effect on team members' motivation or their commitment to team outcomes. Acceptance of the group norms that promote high standards is likely to be greater when those norms have been discussed and established by consensus rather than by fiat. Similarly, direct contact with the group's client influences the overall level of engagement members feel with their task. Consequently, when a powerful individual engages in these behaviors, only that individual's motivation is maximized, to the detriment of that of other team members.

General Proposition 1: Fulfilling behavioral functions that influence the collective motivation of the team is a misuse of individual power.

We also argued that certain features of team effectiveness will suffer when powerful individuals (a) assert team task strategies rather than allowing them to be developed by the group as a whole or (b) exclusively manage relations with the client.

Team task performance will improve when the team as a whole fulfills these functions because task performance is influenced directly by the use made of collective knowledge and skills. When powerful individuals assert particular task strategies, or when they maintain exclusive contact with the client, only that individual's talents are brought to bear on the team's approach to its work. By contrast, when all team members are engaged in fulfilling these functions, the team has the opportunity to draw on the full range of capabilities within the team.

General Proposition II: Fulfilling behavioral functions that are influenced by the collective capabilities of the team is a misuse of individual power.

① An example of the negative consequences of General Propositions I and II can be seen in our project team examples from the beginning of this chapter. We labeled one pattern of individual power use as the over-use pattern. In this example, the powerful team member uses his or her special status in the group to exert influence over most aspects of group functioning. As we described, many of these teams perform quite poorly and are characterized by widespread member dissatisfaction and frustration. We suggest that the negative effects experienced by these teams are the result of an individual team member that has taken over group functions that are linked to team capabilities and motivation. By overusing power, that individual undermined the group's performance through reducing the level of talent that was brought to bear on task strategy and the unity of execution that comes from collective commitment. The widespread dissatisfaction may be a function of perceived poor performance, or it may be a result of team members feeling their authority usurped and their contributions underutilized.

② On the positive side, however, at least these groups have fulfilled some of the important task and relationship functions. In contrast is the second pattern we described, which we labeled abdication. In this pattern, the powerful team member exerts no special influence over task or relations processes—not even to the extent of managing the team's entry into the client organization. Thus, a critical external function was inadequately addressed or addressed by members with less likelihood of doing so effectively. These abdicating individuals also missed important influence opportunities in other domains. By failing to recognize their special influence, they may have been especially complicit in allowing the group to avoid critical functions such as task conflict; hence the smooth interpersonal relations of these groups—but the subsequent poor performance.

Team performance is enhanced when appropriate performance strategies are invented to deal with changing task demands. Thus, the ability of the team to improve as a performing unit over time increases when performance feedback is drawn to the attention of the team, when the team needs are presented to higher authorities, and when its interpersonal conflicts are dealt with. In addition, the commitment of

individual members within the team increases when values are articulated that appeal to team members and when its capabilities and successes are drawn to the attention of external entities. Those teams that fail to fulfill these functions do so to the detriment of team effectiveness. Measures to fill such gaps can be taken by a powerful individual team member with unique status in the group. Better still, if those missing functions are related to member motivation or collective capabilities, the powerful individual can influence the team to address issues that it has avoided or ignored.

General Proposition III: Influencing the team to fulfill behavioral functions that the team has avoided or ignored is an effective use of individual power.

③ Thus, there is a role for a powerful team member to use his or her influence to the benefit of the group. Related to this notion is our third example of power use in project teams, labeled managing the resource. In this instance, the powerful member influences other team members only in the specific domain of his or her special resource—that is, smoothing and facilitating access to the client. Such individuals help the team interpret information and feedback from the client—although they do not assert strategies and interpretations without input from the group. On the basis of our observations, this appears to be a highly effective pattern of influence. In General Proposition III, we expand the range of this behavior to suggest that powerful team members also should encourage the team to address important task and relations functions, when and if they are being neglected or avoided.

In this chapter, we attempted to open and explore an area of research that has thus far been neglected—that of who enacts important task and relational functions within teams. Our purpose has been to raise the issue of the uses and misuses of individual power within groups, and how it might be related to team effectiveness and performance.

We close by raising two issues about power use in teams that we believe call for further exploration—one relevant to structural influences on power dynamics in teams and one about individual differences.

The first, more structural issue has to do with sources of power. We noted at the beginning of the chapter that certain team members

may come to the team with greater power than others for a variety of reasons, including networks of relations outside the group, special skills, and access to critical resources. These structural influences on who holds power in groups may also have implications for the effects of power use on team outcomes. We note that the effectiveness of powerholders in managing the relations of the team to outside authority may be influenced by the individuals' source of power. For example, those who derive power in the team from having powerful external allies or from having extraordinary verbal skills are more likely to fulfill this function effectively than are those who derive their power from a special skill visible only to the team and not to outside authority.

The second issue is that individual powerholders vary in their political tactics and the skill with which they exert influence on team behavior. Individual differences in influence skills will surely affect the impact of power uses on team effectiveness. For example, the potential positive impact of a powerholder encouraging task-related conflict depends on that individual's skill in eliciting diverse opinions about task strategy and helping the group to determine the best course of action. It is at least conceivable that unskilled attempts to raise task conflict could foment relational conflict that undermines team effectiveness. We thus acknowledge the potential importance of considering power sources and skill differences in the relationships we have proposed. These issues, and the propositions we have presented, are meant to stimulate new directions for research and thinking about groups that might prove of interest to the theorist and of importance to the practitioner.

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